

AUGUST 12, 1964

# THE ESPIONAGE JUNGLE

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**T**HE GODFATHER of the puppet South Viet-Nam regime was no other than Allen Dulles, America's espionage chief. In 1953, the first year of the Eisenhower administration, it became clear that the French were losing the war in Indo-China. Washington decided to salvage what still could be salvaged of France's colonial empire. Its plan was to gain a firm foothold on the peninsula and gradually extend its influence to the rest of the area.

There is the evidence of Walter Lippmann that Allen's elder brother, John Foster Dulles, the then Secretary of State, was determined to "protect the fragments of the Indochinese empire against Communist domination without involving American troops in another Korean war." In other words, the plan was to turn South Viet-Nam into an American operational base in Southeast Asia, without being involved in actual fighting. This was to be done by setting up a puppet regime.

The job was assigned to the Central Intelligence Agency. Its cloak-and-dagger operatives were reputed to be highly efficient—they had just pulled off a successful coup in Iran, where the Mossadegh government was overthrown, and were preparing the overthrow of the liberal government of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala.

It was no great secret that the idea of turning South Viet-Nam into a client state, that is, nominally sovereign but actually ruled by Ameri-

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cans through their placemen, originated with the CIA. Nor was it accidental that, at the 1954 Geneva conference which wrote finis to the dirty war in Indo-China, one of the American delegates was General Walter Bedell Smith, former head of the CIA and, at the time of the conference, Under-Secretary of State.

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In the spring of 1954, while the Indochinese war was still in progress, the top CIA man in Saigon, Colonel (now Brigadier) Edward Lansdale was instructed by Allen Dulles to choose a reliable figure to head the South Viet-Nam government. Lansdale chose Ngo Dinh Diem. And not only because he was a violent anti-Communist and had been built up by the Americans as an "incorruptible patriot." There was another reason: after the war the Americans discovered in the secret Japanese archives evidence that Diem had been a Japanese agent. This could always be held against him.

For more than nine years, from July 1954 to November 1963, Diem and his gang were maintained in power by American dollars and bayonets. The bill ran to over \$2,000 million. Much of the money went to train and maintain an army of 220,000, plus a police force and auxiliary units of 150,000. In the conclud-

ing years of the regime, America maintained 15,000 military advisers and instructors to train and indoctrinate Diem's armed forces. They were supplied with American weapons and given American combat support. All this, however, failed to halt the spread of the resistance movement: the National-Liberation Front controls two-thirds of the country's territory with more than half of its total population.

The whole plan was a clear failure. That much was obvious to everyone, and, presumably, also to the men who had installed the "ineffectual dictator."

The CIA decided to get rid of Diem and the Diem family. A military junta was brought to power, headed by General Duong Van Minh, another Washington puppet. Diem and his brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, were assassinated by one of Minh's lieutenants. The cloak-and-dagger tactic had run full circle—the CIA brought Diem to power, now the CIA removed him.

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That the coup of November 1, 1963, was engineered by the CIA was no great secret either. A few days after the news of it came, the *New York Herald Tribune* wrote that categorical denials by the State Department notwithstanding, it could be safely said that this was an American coup.

Some of the details of its organization are typical of the methods employed by the CIA.

First, it was necessary to create an atmosphere of universal condemnation of Diem and the regime. This was done by inciting religious strife between the Buddhists, who make up the overwhelming majority of the population, and the Catholic minor-